

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
7 September 2001 (07.09.2001)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 01/64099 A1

(51) International Patent Classification⁷: **A61B 5/00**,
A63B 24/00

(21) International Application Number: PCT/IB01/00285

(22) International Filing Date: 1 March 2001 (01.03.2001)

(25) Filing Language: English

(26) Publication Language: English

(30) Priority Data:
BO2000A000106 1 March 2000 (01.03.2000) IT

(81) Designated States (*national*): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW.

(84) Designated States (*regional*): ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE, TR), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

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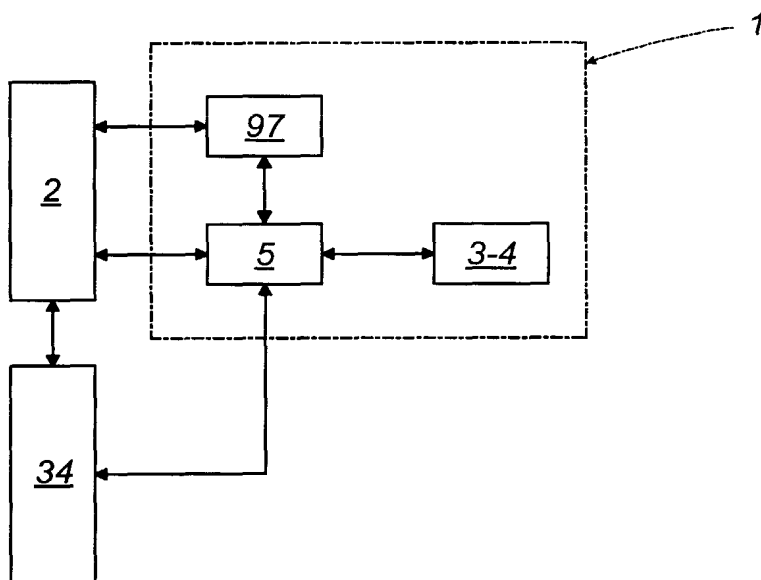
Published:
— with international search report

For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

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(54) Title: SYSTEM FOR INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN USER AND INFORMATION SYSTEM



(57) Abstract: A system for the interactive exchange of information between a user (2) and an information system (3), comprises a memory storage device (4) in which is implemented said information system (3) dedicated to processing information pertaining to the achievement and maintenance of the person's efficiency; a portable terminal (5) for communications between the user (2) and the information system (3), which is provided with at least a processing unit (6) and input means (98) and output means (96) connected to the processing unit (6) and operatively positioned between the latter and the user (2); the system further comprising information exchange means (99) positioned between the processing unit (6) and the memory storage device (4).

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Description

SYSTEM FOR INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN USER AND INFORMATION SYSTEM

Technical Field

The present invention relates to the sector of physical exercise for sports, preventive and/or rehabilitative purposes and in particular it pertains to a system for the interactive and personalised exchange of information between a user and an information system dedicated to processing information concerning the achievement and the maintenance of the person's efficiency.

Background Art

Exercise machines of the most modern and advanced design, both of the professional type and of the amateur type, are devised in such a way as to allow the user to program his/her physical activities in relation with his/her own personal characteristics and requirements.

For this purpose machines are known which, although conceived for a general employment able to meet the diversified needs of a plurality of users, can then be set on a case by case basis to accommodate each individual user and the execution of a specific, individualised work program.

Within the scope of a more pronounced customisation and of the most rigorous possible assessment of the requirement for exercise activity necessary to reach and maintain the best condition of efficiency and well-being, a system for the individualised operation of such machines, already known from patent applications BO99A000179 and BO99A000180 in the name of the same Applicant, takes into consideration the user as a system capable of exchanging energy with the outside world, not strictly limited to the time interval during which an exercise activity is conducted, but also correlated and quantified with the work activity performed and with the user's regimen and diet.

The system takes into consideration personal information, for instance relating to

the person's actual physiological conditions, and manages them together with a series of other parameters such as those concerning his/her nutrition and those concerning the energy expenditure linked with the person's actual daily lifestyle.

This known technique has yielded fully satisfactory results from the standpoint of the specialisation and quantification of activities to suit each individual, but it is susceptible to be further improved, as it has the limitation of intervening on the individual only *a posteriori*, not being able to influence *a priori* his/her behaviours, rationalising and correcting certain habits which are necessary for obtaining the maximum benefit from physical exercise.

Disclosure of Invention

The aim of the present invention therefore is to provide a system which is able to interact with the user in an intelligent manner, assisting and guiding him/her with every sort of information connected and aimed at achieving the maximum possible physical well-being. In other words, the system aims to provide the user with specific and personalised information which range from individually tailored dietary advice, to the personal programming of the exercise machines, to the highlighting and correction of incorrect, counterproductive and/or dangerous behaviours, all this not being necessary limited solely to the time during which the exercise machines are actually used, but also in all other moments of the user's day.

In accordance with the invention, this aim is achieved by a system for the interactive exchange of information between a user and an information system, characterised in that it comprises a memory device in which is implemented said information system dedicated to the processing of information pertaining to the achievement and maintenance of the person's efficiency; a portable communication terminal able to exchange information between the user and the information system, said terminal being provided with at least a processing unit; input means and output means connected to the processing unit and operatively positioned between the latter and the user; and information exchange means positioned between the processing unit and the memory storage device.

If the terminal is constituted, for instance, by a palm-top computer or by a cell

phone, palm-top or of such size as to be wearable, the user may query the information system at any moment of his/her day and receive therefrom advice and suggestions specific for him/herself, based on activities actually carried out and/or currently being carried out. Naturally, such activities are not necessary sporting in nature. Therefore, the terminal is a tool that allows to obtain the maximum benefit in physiological and mental terms.

To facilitate the capability of interactive communication between the user and the information system to the farthest extent possible, input and output means are provided which range from a conventional keyboard to voice synthesisers to allow the vocal and audio transmission of information.

The memory storage device and the terminal can operate locally, remotely, and be also supported by wired or wireless information exchange means.

The terminal can be provided with an interface suitable for connection with an exercise station, thereby allowing the operative system to configure the station each time in an optimal manner for the user, if the station is constituted by a machine for cardiovascular training; vice versa, in such a way as to provide an optimised work table if the machine is constituted by an exercise equipment item or a generic counterweight machine.

The system comprises means for supervising the user's activities with simultaneous assistance, i.e. with adaptive interaction, which assist the user as a tutor with a continuous interaction able to guide him/her, provide advice, encourage him/her, address him/her towards behaviours that are scientifically correct and/or statistically validated by experience, always fully respecting the user's individuality.

This simultaneous assistance is implemented with graphic representation studied according to the user's particularities.

The aforesaid feedback supervising means with simultaneous assistance allow to perform tutorial functions which can replace the presence of the gym instructor with the possibility for the user to perform the exercise activity in optimal conditions, also from the standpoint of safety, in a strictly private environment which can even be located inside his/her home.

Description of the Drawings

The technical features of the invention, according to the aforesaid aims, can be clearly noted from the content of the claims set out below and its advantages shall become more readily apparent in the detailed description that follow, made with reference to the accompanying drawings, which show an embodiment provided purely by way of non limiting example, in which:

- Figure 1 is an overall diagram, in function blocks, of the system of the invention;
- Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5 are block diagrams showing, with a greater level of detail, some characteristic components of the invention of Figure 1.

Description of the Illustrative Embodiment

With reference to the accompanying drawings, the reference number 1 globally indicates a system for the interactive exchange of information between a user 2 and an information system 3 dedicated to processing information relating to the achievement and maintenance of the person's efficiency.

The system essentially comprises (see Figure 1): a memory storage device 4 in which the information system 3 is implemented; a terminal 5 for communicating with the user 2, provided with a processing unit 6; means for exchanging information 99 positioned between the terminal 5 and the memory storage device 4; and sensor means 97 to measure one or more of the state parameters of the user 2 and transmit them to the processing unit 6.

The memory storage device 4 and the terminal 5 are connected by the information exchange means 99 in different modes, which can be mutually combined also in different ways. The connection can be accomplished both locally and remotely; moreover, it can be obtained with a physical connection, in a network, via cable, or in wireless mode, for instance through the transmission of electromagnetic waves over the ether.

As to the embodiment of the memory storage device 4, different alternatives are possible.

The memory storage device 4 can be realised by a smart card from a personal computer; or by a server connected to a dedicated portal, through the Internet global

network.

The communication terminal 5 between the user 2 and the information system 3 is provided, in turn (Figure 2), with at least a said microprocessor processing unit 6 and input means 98 and output means 96 connected to the processing unit 6 and operatively positioned between the latter and the user 2.

Constructively speaking, the communication terminal can advantageously be realised by a palm-top computer 10, or by a cellular portable telephone 11, preferably made in a manner suitable to be associated to a belt, so as to be wearable, for instance, at the user's wrist.

The communication terminal 5 can also be provided with an interface 35 to interact with at least an exercise station 34 dedicated to the user 2.

If the exercise station 34 is realised by a machine for cardiovascular training, the interface 35 is designed to manage also the training modes reproducible on the machine itself.

If, differently from this hypothesis, the exercise machine 34 instead comprises a counterweight machine, the terminal 5 provides the user 2 with instructions for executing a training program on said counterweight machine.

The interface 35 can be embodied in the most suitable forms, for the type of the exercise station 34, by means of an RS 232 card; a USB card; a Windows CE standard compatible card or even an ADVANTECH 5820/I card. Transmission protocols will be different in each case and may be identified for instance in the UMTS protocol for the transmission of video programs; in the WAP protocol usable for wireless communication, for instance with infrared beams, between telephone and physical devices associated thereto. Said protocols may be employed, by way of non limiting indication, to allow the exchange of information for instance between communication terminal and information system or, or also, between input means, output means, processing unit and terminal.

The input means 98, associated to the terminal 5 and positioned between user 2 and processing unit 6, are also realised in a plurality of embodiments, which can mutually coexist also in various combinations.

According to a first embodiment, said input means are constituted (see Figure 3) by

a conventional keyboard 12 or, alternatively and/or additionally, they can be constituted: by a miniaturised graphic tablet 13; by an optical pen 15, by a touch screen 19 (touch-sensitive device), by a magnetic reader 20, by an optical reader 21, by a video camera 22, by a voice synthesiser 23, and by a modem 27. These input means 98 can be connected
5 operatively with the portable telephone 5 which for this purpose is provided with suitable connection ports equipped with related cards.

The output means 96, associated to the portable terminal 5 can be realised also in the form of LED or LCD display 29; or they can be embodied by an audio synthesiser 32, and by the same modem 27. All these means then interact with the terminal 5 by means of
10 suitable ports and connection cards.

The system 1 further comprises sensor means 97 provided to measure one or more parameters relating to the physiological state of the user 2 and communicate them, in real time, to the information system 3 through the processing means 6.

The sensor means 97 can be realised in different ways. For instance, they can be
15 embodied by a heart rate monitor 7 applied to the body of the user 2 which, during the execution of a work program, allows the information system 3 to verify and keep under control the physiological parameters of the user 2, monitoring them during the activity. A different embodiment of the sensor means 97, provided to measure instead a mechanical state of the user 2, in terms of instantaneous position parameters, provides instead for the
20 use of a global positioning system (GPS) receiver 8. Knowledge of the instantaneous position of the user 2 allows the information system 3 to perform computations to determine the distances covered by the user during his/her daily ambulation or work activity, or during the execution of other activities such a walk or a run. This allows, taking into account the time and speeds of execution, assessments in terms of energy expenditure
25 which will then be useful to determine a realistic requirement for exercise activity for the user, and consequently to enable the preparation of activity programs scientifically tailored for him/her.

The system comprises feedback means 95 for supervising the activity of the user 2 with simultaneous assistance of the user 2 him/herself. The user can be assisted and guided
30 during the execution of his/her activity regardless of the physical presence of an instructor.

This allows the great advantage of letting the user 2 perform his/her activity not necessarily on an exercise station 34 of a public gym, in the presence of an instructor; but also, possibly alone, in a personal home gym or even outdoors.

Said supervising means are designed to interact with the user 2 by means of an expressive graphic representation, preferably animated, which is conceived to provide differentiated simultaneous assistance, variable in relation with the specific characteristics of the user 2 or with the different age bands of the users 2 who interact with the information system 3. In other words, the animated graphics may vary in their expressive form depending on the type of user 2, in terms of their graphic aspect, their specific communication language, and their specific behaviour.

The supervising means are also designed to recognise the user 2, by means of self-learning consequent to his/her successive accesses to the information system 3; to store the interaction modes at each connection and also to perform comparisons of the performance of the user 2 with sample, reference, performance levels, which may for instance be constituted by a performance previously provided by the user 2 him/herself and stored by the information system 3; or by a performance which is being simultaneously provided by one or more other users 2: all this allowing the conduct of comparative tests or virtual competitions of the user 2 against him/herself or against other users 2 who exercise with him in a real or virtual training class, distributed in physically remote locations.

The idea at the basis of the present invention therefore is that of making available to the user 3, by means of the cell phone, a knowledge base, residing in the information system 3, able to analyse the user's behavioural modes; to verify their correctness in relation to scientific principle and/or to modes statistically validated by experience and able intelligently to guide the user 2 towards the most suitable and effective behaviours for him/her.

The system further allows to implement a wide range of functionalities, able to be subdivided in broad terms, into specific functionalities of the exercise machine; into functionalities independent from the machine; and into functionalities correlated to the machine: irrespective of this classification, these functionalities are highly advantageously and strongly innovative in the sense that they integrate and expand some basic

functionalities which, in principle, were already known, adding wholly new functionalities thereto.

Even for the specific functionalities of the exercise machine relating to controlling the machine and managing training modes - which in themselves are known from previous patent documents and embodiments by the Applicant - the degree of feedback effected on the exercise machine by the supervising means with simultaneous assistance to the user 2 is considerably amplified in its basic potentialities, and is also very effective and friendly by effect of the graphic/expressive capabilities of the system 1.

In regard to the functionalities that are independent from the exercise machine, in addition to the possibility of receiving virtual assistance, also in the form of simple personalised information, the system 1 allows the user 2 the opportunity, during the training session, to display the data for the session in real time in a browser window and to access basic Internet functionalities, thus being able to send and receive mail, or to communicate with other users by voice or video.

As to the functionalities correlated to the exercise machine of a generic station, a system according to the invention provides the capability of interfacing the machine with an Internet provider able to drive it.

Moreover, by realising a protocol able to allow to drive a machine remotely, the realisation is enabled of numerous other functionalities which foreshadow a real time link between the machine or the apparatus. It is possible to interact from a remote information system on the system for networking the machines in a gym, integrating with the local area network to conduct tests in real time; to propose new training programs; to re-propose previously conducted training sessions; to select a specific bitmap route; to select a training video; to run remote diagnostics on the machine and, or also, to replace the local control system with a centralised information system on a remote portal.

The invention thus conceived can be subject to numerous modifications and variations, without thereby departing from the scope of the inventive concept. Moreover, all components can be replaced by technically equivalent elements.

Claims

1. A system for the interactive exchange of information between a user (2) and an information system (3), characterised in that the information system (3) is dedicated to processing information relating to the achievement and maintenance of the person's efficiency and in that it comprises a memory storage device (4) in which said information system (3) is implemented; a portable communication terminal (5) between the user (2) and the information system (3), which is provided with at least a unit (6) for processing the information and input means (98) and output means (96) connected to the processing unit (6) and able to interact between it and the user (2); the system further comprising means to exchange information (99) positioned between the processing unit (6) and the memory storage device (4).

2. A system as claimed in claim 1, characterised in that it comprises sensor means (97) to measure at least a parameter of state of the user (2) and transmit it to the processing unit (6).

3. A system as claimed in claim 2, characterised in that the sensor means (97) are devised to measure a parameter of physiological state of the user (2).

4. A system as claimed in claim 2 or 3, characterised in that said sensor means (97) comprise a heart rate monitor (7) applied to the body of the user (2).

5. A system as claimed in claim 2, characterised in that said sensor means (97) are devised to measure a mechanical state of the user (2).

6. A system as claimed in claim 2, characterised in that the sensor means (97) are devised to measure a parameter of instantaneous position of the user (2).

7. A system as claimed in claim 5, characterised in that the sensor means (97)

comprise a satellite-type absolute position indicator (8).

8. A system as claimed in claim 1, characterised in that the portable terminal (5) is a telephone (11).

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9. A system as claimed in claim 8, characterised in that the portable telephone (11) is of the cellular type.

10. A system as claimed in one of the claims from 1 to 9, characterised in that said terminal (5) can be worn by the user (2).

10

11. A system as claimed in claim 10, characterised in that said terminal (5) can be associated to a belt.

12. A system as claimed in claim 11, characterised in that said terminal (5) can be worn on the wrist of the user (2).

15

13. A system as claimed in one of the previous claims, characterised in that the input means (98) positioned between the user (2) and the processing unit (6) are embodied by a keyboard (12).

20

14. A system as claimed in one of the previous claims, characterised in that the input means (98) positioned between the user (2) and the processing unit (6) are embodied by a voice synthesiser (23).

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15. A system as claimed in one of the previous claims, characterised in that the input means (98) positioned between the user (2) and the processing unit (6) are embodied by a modem (27).

16. A system as claimed in one of the previous claims, characterised in that the output

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means (96) positioned between the user (2) and the processing unit (6) are embodied by a display (29).

17. A system as claimed in one of the previous claims, characterised in that the output means (96) positioned between the user (2) and the processing unit (6) are embodied by an audio synthesiser (32).

18. A system as claimed in one of the previous claims, characterised in that the output means (96) positioned between the user (2) and the processing unit (6) are embodied by a modem (27).

19. A system as claimed in one of the previous claims, characterised in that the means (99) for exchanging information between the memory storage device (4) and the terminal (5) comprise a connection obtained in wireless mode.

20. A system as claimed in one of the previous claims, characterised in that the communication terminal (5) is provided with an interface (35) to interact with at least an exercise station (34) dedicated to the user (2).

21. A system as claimed in one of the previous claims, characterised in that the exercise station (34) comprises a cardiovascular training machine.

22. A system as claimed in claim 21, characterised in that the interface (35) is devised to manage at least the functionalities for controlling the cardiovascular training machine.

23. A system as claimed in claim 21 and 22, characterised in that the interface (35) is devised to manage the training modes reproducible on the cardiovascular training machine.

24. A system as claimed in claim 20, characterised in that the exercise station (34) comprises a counterweight machine, the terminal (5) being able to provide the user (2) with

instructions for conducting a training program on said counterweight machine.

25. A system as claimed in at least one of the claims from 20 to 24, characterised in that said interface (35) is embodied by an RS 232 card.

5

26. A system as claimed in at least one of the claims from 20 to 25, characterised in that said interface (35) is embodied by a USB.

10

27. A system as claimed in one of the previous claims from 20 to 26, characterised in that said interface (35) can be embodied by a Win CE standard compatible card.

28. A system as claimed in one of the previous claims from 20 to 27, characterised in that said interface (35) can be embodied by an ADVANTECH 5820/I card.

15

29. A system as claimed in one of the previous claims, characterised in that it comprises feedback means for supervising the activities of the user (2) with the simultaneous assistance of said user (2) him/herself.

20

30. A system as claimed in claim 29, characterised in that said supervising means are devised to interact with the user (2) by means of at least one expressive graphic representation.

25

31. A system as claimed in claim 30, characterised in that said graphic representation is animated.

32. A system as claimed in one of the claims from 29 to 31, characterised in that said supervising means are devised to provide differentiated simultaneous assistance, in relation with the specifications of the user (2).

30

33. A system as claimed in one of the claims from 29 to 32, characterised in that said

supervising means are devised to store the interaction modes of a specific user (2) and to adapt autonomously at each of his/her subsequent interactions with the terminal (5).

34. A system as claimed in one of the claims from 30 to 33, characterised in that said
5 graphic representation is devised to compare the current performance of the user (2) with a reference performance.

35. A system as claimed in claim 34, characterised in that said reference performance
10 is a previous performance provided by the user (2) him/herself.

36. A system as claimed in claim 34, characterised in that said reference performance
is a simultaneous performance of at least a different user (2).

37. A system as claimed in one of the previous claims from 29 to 36, characterised in
15 that it interacts with said exercise station (34) located in a public gym.

38. A system as claimed in one of the previous claims from 29 to 36, characterised in
that it interacts with said exercise station (34) of a personal gym.

20 39. A system as claimed in any of the previous claims, characterised in that it is able to employ a communication protocol (UMTS) able to transmit video programs.

40. A system as claimed in one of the previous claims characterised in that it is able to employ a communication protocol (WAP) able to transmit wireless signals.

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FIG.1

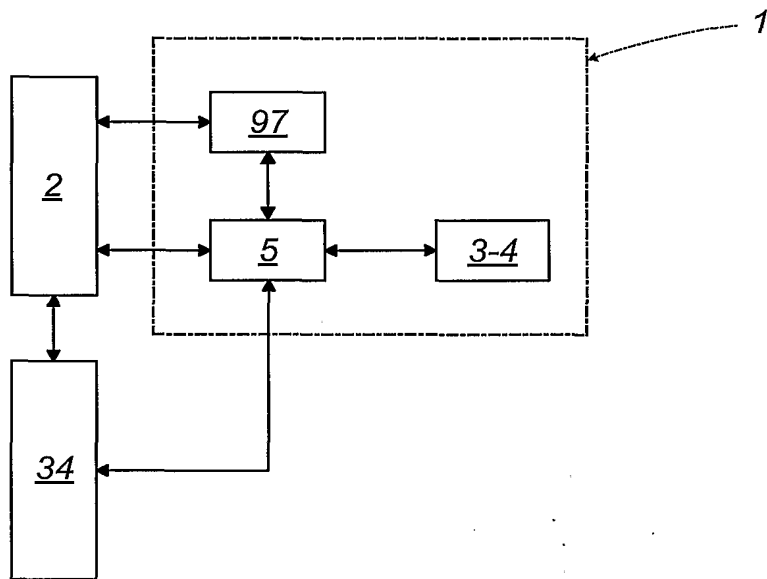


FIG.2

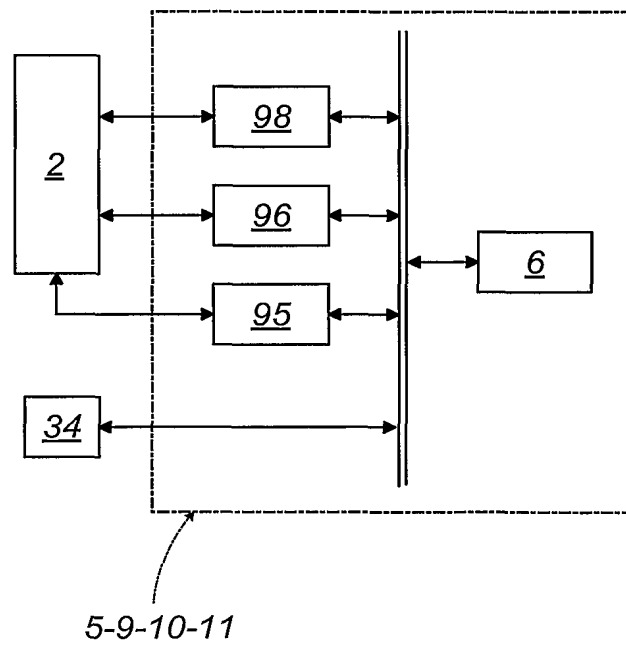


FIG.3

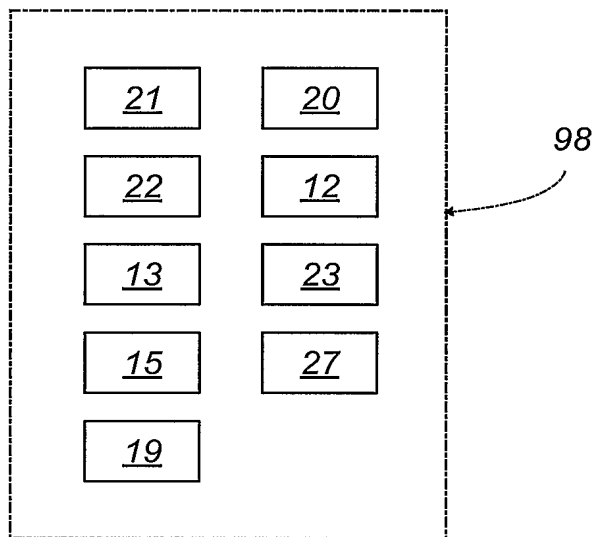


FIG.4

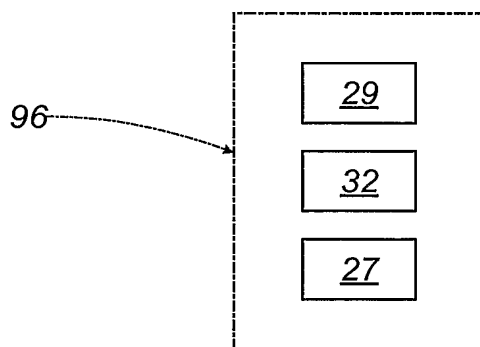
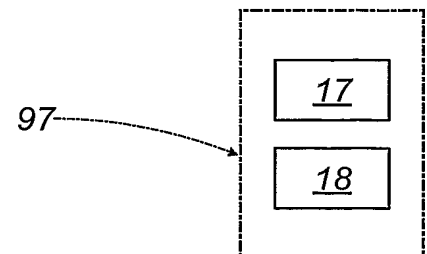


FIG.5



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/IB 01/00285

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC 7 A61B5/00 A63B24/00

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 A61B A63B G06F

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, WPI Data

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category °	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
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A	page 8, line 24 -page 9, line 5 page 14, line 29 -page 16, line 22 page 18, line 13 - line 16 page 19, line 31 -page 20, line 5 ----- -/--	8, 14

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

7 June 2001

Date of mailing of the international search report

22/06/2001

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

In ☐ International Application No

PCT/IB 01/00285

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

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